Introduction

The aim of this article is to bring into the wider IHRM discussion an overlooked yet rapidly growing body of non-corporate expatriate workers, namely teachers who are living and working abroad in international schools. The neglect of this expatriate group is likely due to ongoing confusion about who is, and is not, an expatriate. McNulty and Brewster (2017a, b) suggest that research about expatriates is both terminologically sloppy and lacking in clarity of definition. Doherty (2013, p. 448) rightly notes that "some scholars have raised the concern that the academic literature does not address fully the range of individuals who undertake an international career path." This 'full range' includes *international* school teachers, a heretofore understudied and rarely acknowledged population of expatriates whose professional life exists *only* when they live and work abroad.

The IHRM field is not solely responsible for ignoring international school teachers. While searches of IHRM literature reveals very little about international schools and the expatriate teachers who work within them, searches of the broader literature beyond education fare no better. For example, a preliminary search in *Google Scholar* for articles published in 2012 reveals nothing about international schools from within the mainstream IHRM literature, and very little outside educational sources. Moreover, even the literature on international schools in the education field tends to ignore the expatriate teacher. Bailey (2015, p. 4), who explored the professional identity of expatriate teachers working in an international school in Malaysia, noted that "studying the professional work and identity of teachers leaving national settings in order to work in international schools would be of interest," further noting that, "the lives of international school teachers and the ease with which they are able to transition between national and international institutions remain little researched".

International Schools and International School Teachers

International schools are, in the main, English-medium schools overseas (Brummitt and Keeling, 2013; Hayden and Thompson, 2013). Traditionally, international schools had a role in catering to elite expatriate families in public and private sectors working overseas (Hill, 2014). However, over recent years this role has broadened to include children of the local "aspirational middle class" (Hayden and Thompson (2013). The parents of children in international schools are themselves business expatriates, whilst other children's parents are locals, thus placing the expatriate teacher in a middling situation encompassing a complex set of relationships; they are "middling actors operating in transnational spaces of elite international education" (Tarc and Mishra Tarc, 2015, p. 49).

The growth of the international school sector has been dramatic, and was largely unpredicted. Walker (2000) had stated over 15 years ago that there were about 1,000 international schools. Yet, data collected and published by Oxfordshire-based ISC Research (part of The International School Consultancy), using the broad definition above, has revealed huge growth in international schools over the past 20 years: 8,257 English-medium international schools as of March 2016 (Gaskell, 2016), enrolling over 4.37 million students. By region, Asia (including Western Asia and the Middle East) has the current majority (54%) of international schools, enrolling 60% of all students as of March 2016. By country, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and China lead the world in terms of number of schools, whilst the UAE has the highest number of enrolled students. Put simply, the UAE (especially Dubai) now forms the new epicentre of international school activity, although it has attracted (surprisingly) little research attention.

Little is known about the body of international school teachers, in general, and it remains a relatively under-researched, under-theorised and little-discussed topic, even in mainstream international education literature. Instead, the latter has always tended to focus on the school, the child, and their parents alongside broader leadership and pedagogical issues (Canterford,

2003; Holderness, 2002). Bailey (2015, p. 6) thus noted "there is a paucity of data examining teachers' work in international schooling." Topics *interalia* such as teacher typology, contract, service, recruitment, retention, motivation, satisfaction, and turnover have received relatively almost no attention. Similarly, there has been very little discussion about who becomes an expatriate teacher, and why, and little has been said about the realities of working in an international school. Bailey (2015, p.6), observed that "we need a more complex explanation of the motivations and careers of teachers in international schools," which immediately highlights a large potential area of research.

The overall neglect in the literature is partly understandable from a historical perspective. Going back 30-years, Matthews (1988) identified a field involving only 50,000 teachers, which by 2000 had grown only to a reported 90,000 staff (Brummitt, 2009). Since then, however, international school teacher numbers have grown significantly, commensurate with the huge growth in the number of international schools, having reached 402,000 teachers by 2016. Notably, teacher numbers are expected to almost double, to about 780,000, by 2026 (Gaskell, 2016., p.24).

The relatively few attempts to classify teachers in international schools provides only arbitrary (and somewhat 'sloppy') taxonomies based on length-of-stay or marital status, without any attention to their careers and professional identity (Bailey, 2015). We thus have only a limited picture (see Sims, 2011): 85% of expatriate teachers are Caucasian; 16% are employed for one year, 45% for 2 to 5 years, and 20% for more than 10 years; almost half (48%) have 'single' marital-status; and 72% were under the age of 40, with almost one-third being in their 20's. Data therefore suggests that international school teachers are relatively young and subsequently largely inexperienced.

Are International School Teachers Expatriates?

The question remains, why is there so little research about international school teachers given their substantial numbers? Is it that international school teachers are not perceived to be expatriates on the basis that they do not fit neatly into existing typologies of business expatriates more broadly? McNulty and Brewster (2017a) recently alluded to this problem when developing their concept of business expatriates. Using prototype theory, they developed a best example ('prototype') of a business expatriate using four boundary conditions to determine the jointly sufficient attributes that form the prototype, namely: (1) being organizationally employed; (2) an intended temporary stay abroad; (3) non-citizenship of the host-country; and, (4) obtaining legal compliance to work abroad (a legal work and/or residency visa). Their conceptualization of business expatriates determines membership vs. non-membership to the concept by the extent to which the 'expatriate' meets the boundary conditions, i.e., low vs. high, borderline, typical, or atypical membership. There are two critical outcomes from their study to support our argument here that international school teachers warrant greater attention in the expatriate literature. First, the umbrella term 'business expatriate' used by McNulty & Brewster (2017a) specifically includes workers that are typically neglected by the 'expatriate' constructs of the past, thus creating a broader spectrum of identity and belonging of expatriates in future studies. Second, their deliberate use of the 'business expatriate' term, rather than 'corporate expatriate', opens up the possibility to include all kinds of business, in all kinds of sectors: corporate business as well as business in the public sector, non-governmental organizations, arts, sports, and *education*.

The recent adoption of the business expatriate term seems nonetheless indicative of a much bigger problem than just 'terminological sloppiness,' and appears to revolve around deeper issues of the perceived status of expatriates. From this, I see two problems arising. In the first instance, there is an implication in the literature about expatriates that the focus is predominantly on those that have been assigned by organisations (organization-assigned

expatriates, or AEs)[1], thus indicating a certain bias at the expense of studying other expatriates (e.g., self-initiated expatriates/SIEs, low-skilled expatriates, and so on). In the second instance, and inter-connected with the first, is that the situation implies that a hierarchy of expatriates exists, i.e., corporate expatriates are seen as the original and 'legitimate' version, and thus worthy of greater discussion and attention. They have been, after all, described as traditional expatriates (Suutari and Brewster, 2000), and have taken up the bulk of researchers' attention, which does imply a somewhat superior status. The myriad of terms and labels to describe both AEs and SIEs would certainly seem to testify to a hierarchical picture, as both get stratified along a broad spectrum of identity, with overlapping features. It is worth noting that the literature rarely (explicitly, at least) highlights such a situation, however it is likely to be the case in practice, and is certainly assumed in nearly all prior studies about expatriates (see McNulty & Brewster, 2017b).

Particularly significant about the broader concept of the business expatriate is that it implies there is a large body of expatriates in the 'middle' of the spectrum, being neither corporate (privileged/fully-assisted) nor precariat (non-privileged/non-assisted), and who have escaped attention within the dominant AE versus SIE debate. Further, the notion of a spectrum brings with it the idea that the status of an expatriate worker can change, over time, and within different contexts (see McNulty & Vance, 2017; Doherty et al., 2013). This situation probably resonates with those people who have actually lived as an expatriate. For example, once abroad, a teacher initially has the status of an *overseas hire* and typically earns a higher salary than a *local hire*. However, overseas hire status is usually temporary. For a real-world example, consider that the overseas hire teacher at Copenhagen International School becomes a local

[1] AEs are widely conceived of as being sent by an organization ('organizationally assigned') to work abroad for a defined period ('temporarily').

hire after five-year's service, which then involves a significant drop in salary and reduced benefits such as repatriation allowances.

A goal of this research note, as stated, is to add some conceptual clarity to the notion that some business expatriates – such as international school teachers – exist in the 'middle' while still retaining full expatriate status by definition. McNulty and Brewster (2017a, p. 45) sum it up well by stating,

> Extant literature acknowledges that the path to becoming a business expatriate can take different forms of expatriation, i.e. that it can be organization-initiated or self-initiated.

In other words, the main criterion for being a business expatriate is the intention to be legally employed temporarily whilst overseas, irrespective of whether one is assigned to the job, or self-initiates the act. It is *why* he or she is overseas and not *how* they got there that is paramount. In this context, the international school teacher as 'precariat worker' (Standing, 2011) is also a business expatriate.

Little or no attempt has been made in the international education literature to define an international school teacher. For example, Bailey (2015, p.4) refers simply to 'expatriate teachers' and 'expatriate staff' (p. 7), who are also crudely described as being 'a foreigner' (p. 6). At first glance, teachers in international schools almost universally appear to be SIEs as defined by the broader expatriate literature: individuals who initiate and usually finance their own expatriation and are not transferred by organizations (Shaffer et al., 2012). Bailey's (2015, p. 9) study revealed a high level of self-initiation wherein teachers "revelled in and enjoyed the uncertainty" of working abroad and "felt they had actively chosen these challenges, rather than having them imposed upon them". Using Cerdin and Selmer's (2013) framework (the worker has relocated overseas voluntarily; the worker has employment purposes; the worker intends a temporary stay; and the worker has professional qualifications), I observe that their conceptualization of SIEs fits suitably, in the main, the context of teachers

who have chosen to work overseas in an international school: they are voluntarily aiming to work overseas for a temporary amount of time using the same professional qualifications that they would have used back home.

Simply assigning the label of 'SIE' to teachers in international schools is potentially misleading; it implies that expatriate teachers are self-funded free-agents at the point of entry to a new country. While we know very little about the level of support teachers receive, for example, with visas or work-permits, and undoubtedly this is likely true of the literature on SIEs in general (Al Ariss and Syed, 2011), we do know in practice that many teachers who choose to work abroad first attend well-established 'job-fairs' in various locations globally, and then are offered some degree of assistance to relocate by their chosen employer. In other words, international school teachers have features of both SIEs and AEs; they have chosen to temporarily work abroad but often are assisted, to a degree, in doing so. This illustrates that the two dominant streams of identity, AE and SIE, are not always clear-cut constructs (see McNulty & Vance, 2017). Further, one cannot assume that all teachers are leaving to work overseas voluntarily (a further criterion of SIEs). To reiterate, we still know very little about their motivation to teach overseas. For example, while Shepherd (2009) found that one teacher left Scotland to teach at a British school in Saudi Arabia because of "huge cuts in education budgets in Edinburgh and a lot of people are chasing few jobs" (i.e., felt forced to leave), other research (e.g., Chandler, 2010) has revealed that only the overseas location is important but does not tell us *why* the teacher left their home country to seek work abroad. In other words, applying the concept of SIE to international school teachers is nuanced and does not necessarily account for the full range of push and pull factors in their decision to move abroad.

To assist in theorising to determine where international school teachers fit in the broader spectrum of expatriates, I adopt the concept of the 'middling actor': a situation where some expatriates identify themselves in the middle of the business expatriate spectrum, with less

status than AEs but more status than some completely autonomous and self-directed SIEs, particularly the precariat workers. Understandably, while their relationship with other peer-expatriates can be hierarchical, they retain full business expatriate status. At the same time, they occupy a complex 'middling' position between other types of expatriates they encounter in their daily working lives (e.g., parents as corporate expatriates; cleaners and canteen staff as low-skilled expatriates). I use Bourdieu's (1977; 1984) work on 'habitus', 'capitals' and 'doxa', forming a distinct theory of society (Navarro, 2006), to conceptualise the situation for international school teachers in practice. This complexity could arguably be one framework for conceptualising the neglect, generally, of the non-corporate expatriate worker, of which the international school teacher is just one over-looked example.

Emergence of a 'Middling' Position for Expatriate Teachers

Tarc and Mishra Trac (2015, p. 41), directly discussing teachers in international schools, incorporate the concept of 'middling' (Spivak, 1999) and the 'middle actor'. Their view is that the term middling addresses the dearth of studies on the "middle forms of transnational mobility", whilst most studies instead feature populations from the extreme ends (i.e., elite and impoverished) of social class difference (p. 42). In the context of the present examination, the elite might be construed as being the corporate expatriate. The other (extreme) end might then be viewed as territory made up largely of the low-skilled, low-paid precariat worker (Standing, 2011). Temporarily-employed Indian construction workers in Qatar, readying that nation for FIFA World Cup 2022, would seem a good precariat example (Millward, 2016). The precariat is a body of workers affected by a seven-point insecurity framework, including lack of pensions or union-recognition and representing a "more fragmented global class structure" (Standing, 2011, p. 7).

The essence of Standing's (2011) thesis is that the neo-liberal model, dominant since the 1970s and formed of increased labour market flexibility and de-regulation, has created a

scenario where there are now millions of workers without "an anchor of stability" (p. 1). This body of expatriate workers would arguably fit well at the lower end of the business expatriate spectrum (McNulty and Brewster, 2017a), being conceptualised in recent research as hidden expatriates (Haak-Saheem & Brewster, 2017). In the context of international schools, teachers thus "find themselves in dense transnational space where elites, middling actors and local populations agonizingly struggle, with and against each" (Tarc and Mishra Tarc, 2015, p. 49). They might have the features of both the corporate expatriate and the precariat worker, yet have the attention of neither set of researchers or commentators (Bunnell, 2015).

The Middling Position within a Bourdieu Lens: The Concept of a 'Theory of Society'

To address this lack of attention, I mobilise an analysis based upon the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieau's notions of 'field', 'habitus', 'doxa', 'misrecognition' and 'capital(s)' (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1986, and 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Together, these concepts help form and conceptualize a distinct theory of society (Navarro, 2006). Bourdieu sees power as being culturally, symbolically and socially created, and this framework arguably fits well with schools as institutions. Critically, Bourdieu was observing French/Algerian society in the 1960s (i.e., not institutions as such); his work thus has some limitations in its application to complex (Anglo-American) schools. Nonetheless, international schools, like all models of schools, can be viewed as an arena ('field') whereby agents, or actors, can use strategies or 'games' to safeguard and improve their position. Further, international schools in particular, given the diversity of cultures operating within the field, often have a complex set of assumptions in routines plus accepted norms of social behaviour ('habitus'), which affect relations, agency, identity and status. I will now examine three.

The Expatriate Teacher in the Staffroom

The first ‘habitus’ within the international school, at an organisational level, exists in the staffroom where there can be sets of power relations between teachers. Bailey’s (2015, p. 14) study revealed that teachers sensed a “strongly stratified” community, with divisions between the expatriate teachers and local staff, and divisions between the expatriate teachers who were overseas-hires and those who were locally-hired. Bailey (2015) had noted a “stratified staffroom” that “caused concern”. The teachers hired whilst overseas (often temporarily) have more economic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998) than other expatriate teachers in the same school. Also, they may have more cultural capital (as they have worked in more schools) than teachers who are either local or have lived in the host-country for a long-time. Bailey (2015) refers to the role of the “experienced expatriate teacher” (p. 9), which adds another angle to the issue; the new expatriate teacher may be caught in the middle between the experienced expatriate and the local teachers. Further, this unequal set of relations is little questioned, and exists as an example of what Bourdieu (1977) called ‘doxa’; a situation of inequality adhered to and taken for granted, perhaps unconsciously, as normal within the habitus. It is a situation where the “natural and social world appears as self-evident” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). The concept of doxa becomes significant in answering why some sectors of expatriate workers have been neglected or overlooked by discussion or research; they are simply deemed as normal and therefore insignificant.

The expatriate teacher within the school community

The second ‘habitus’ within the international school exists in the wider school community where there can be a complex set of power relations between the teachers and parents. On the one hand, the expatriate teacher might have higher status than many of the local parents, but on the other they may have perceivably less status with those parents who are themselves high skilled business expatriates employed in multinational corporations and thus viewed as having more symbolic or social capital (Bourdieu, 1998). This situation is even more complex in the

traditional ‘Type A’ (Hayden and Thompson, 2013) international school where the parents act as employers of the teachers, electing a body of parents (‘trustees’) to manage the school and appoint the school’s administrators. While teachers can and often do have high status as custodians of the parents’ children, they often (and regularly) are viewed by parents as their employees, much like an extension of the household help (McNulty and Carter, 2017). In each situation, there is a series of hierarchies and potential inequalities, as in any habitus. The expatriate teacher is thus caught in the middle - seen as superior to some but deemed inferior to (and by) others.

The expatriate teacher in the wider international community

The third ‘habitus’ for international school teachers exists in a society-level habitus where the teacher is, in theory, part of the wider expatriate community in which he or she lives, made up mainly of AEs and to a lesser extent SIEs. Often, the expatriate teacher may not be visible within this community due to a lack of access to, or interest in, the typical social and industry events AEs are engaged in or attracted to attend. Instead, international school teachers often ‘stick to their own’ in teacher-only social networks, in the same way that expatriate parents tend to form social groups within the international school community to which their child or children belongs. The absence of teachers within the broader socialisation of expatriate communities might lead to a perception that there are *real* forms of expatriates versus *others* resulting in one becoming the more legitimate form than another. Bourdieu (1986) refers to this as ‘misrecognition’, i.e., a sense of cultural or symbolic inequality between two seemingly similar sets of actors. In turn, the perceived inequality becomes taken for granted and assumed as the norm, i.e., it becomes a state of ‘doxa’.

To illustrate these three forms of habitus, consider a British-born and trained teacher who has chosen to work in an international school in Bangkok. He or she is an actor in three sets of

habitus. They occupy a stratified staffroom which contains other British-expatriates who might be experienced or local-hire. They also occupy a stratified school community, which contains British expatriates who are parents. Third, they occupy a stratified social environment consisting of British expatriates who work for British companies overseas. In each context, they may find themselves to be a 'middling actor'. One can also imagine other contexts; for example, consider an expatriate nurse working overseas in a private hospital where many of the doctors are expatriates, and the patients are AEs.

Discussion

It is important to restate the point that the body of international schools worldwide looks set to double in number over the next ten years, and the number of expatriate teachers in these schools is set to reach up to 700,000 by 2026. This is clearly an expatriate workforce that warrants greater research attention. Besides meriting more research attention, greater awareness of this expatriate segment may shed new light on other non-corporate expatriate groups, as well as their possible interactions. For example, examination of the challenges and dynamics of the staffroom interactions among expatriate teachers who were recruited and hired from abroad, those expatriate teachers hired locally, and local country staff may enlighten our understanding of similar matters associated with their multinational counterparts (i.e., AEs, locally-hired SIEs, and local national employees).

In practical terms, there is a need for raising greater awareness about the implications that arise for international school teachers because of their middling positon. Bailey (2015, p. 9) notes that "a teacher arriving at an international school from overseas requires not only induction into a school but also induction into a whole new culture." In a Bourdieu context of study, the word 'culture' here could be replaced by 'habitus' where the middling position for teachers may come as a shock. Further, their SIE status, where being "self-reliant and

autonomous" (Doherty et al., 2013, p. 450) can sound positive and exciting, can also lead to feeling under-supported and lonely. Additionally, teachers are increasingly finding that "their role had become more uncertain" in their international environment, and felt they could be "dismissed easily" (Bailey, 2015, p. 9) or encounter "an acute and abrupt change in their working conditions" (p. 13), resulting in a particularly precarious work-setting. The above implies that a change of status frequently arises that international school teachers may not be aware of or prepared for before moving abroad, thus going from being secure at home to being insecure abroad.

Research on SIEs flags this as a potential issue, noting that "there is a lack of attention to the possible changes that SIEs can experience in terms of status" (Doherty et al., 2013, p. 450). Significantly, Glassock and Fee (2014), in their study of the decision-making processes of SIEs, concluded a surprising finding in that no respondents in their study had identified or considered, before relocating abroad, issues related to how they might be treated after arriving in the host-country. In other words, there was no consideration given to the potential change in status that might occur, or how they might fit into the broader expatriate arenas of habitus. Further, the notion of becoming a middling actor seemed to pose no concern, or at least was not part of the decision-making process, thus suggesting how precarious the decision-making process is or can be.

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